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THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND.

IN some remote corners of Europe, legends linger of phantom hosts appearing at certain periods, and waging through the night aerial warfare over battlefields where they anciently contended in the flesh. The superstition is recalled by the ghostly conflict between St. George and St. Patrick, which made the mild sensation of the Queen's Jubilee in America. A hundred years ago our Union was founded, and for the first generation thereafter the wars raging in Europe were reflected in violent political struggles in the United States. The new republic had no domestic polities. This situation did not end without war, but it ended. America was detached from European broils and entanglements, and Old World notions and institutions have become more and more shadowy to us with every year of this century. Nay, even for English and Irish colonies, the American atmosphere seems to change transatlantic forms to phantoms. The Victoria eulogized by St. George does not exist in the flesh ; the Queen denounced by St. Patrick does not exist.

On a Sunday, in the Jubilee, I attended a historical American church, owning some allegiance to Canterbury, which for a time was made over to St. George. The solid Englishman who preached on the occasion seemed to me adrift in seas of mental confusion. He invited us to leave contemplation of the Queen and consider her excellence as a woman. He pronounced her the "typical wife, typical mother, typical woman," but none of his anecdotes or illustrations warranted any inference that Alexandrina Victoria was any better than hundreds of good women, wives, and mothers, around him. A cynical critic might have interpreted such personal eulogy as a sarcasm on royalty, as implying wonder that even ordinary womanly virtues could co-exist with it. We were also called to admire because Victoria sent sympathetic messages to Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Garfield. What marvelous self-sacrifice !

The prayers and lamentations of millions of ordinary people, in many countries, may pass without notice,—but think of these royal regrets ! What are Presidents that the Queen should be mindful of them !

Unquestionably it is not for the woman,—who long ago passed her fiftieth birthday without parade,—but for the Queen that peculiar honor may be claimed. Yet, when we turn from colonial canonization of the woman to Celtic denunciation of the Queen, we find the latter equally phantasmal. The Queen has officially as little responsibility for the sufferings of Ireland as Mrs. Cleveland. To ascribe to the English monarch powers similar to those of an American President is a delusion into which many migrate when they reach this country. It is our constitutional superstition. The Mayor of New York declared that he paid honor to the Queen because, while visiting England during our war, he learned that the non-intervention of England was due to Her Majesty's personal friendship for us. Now, I was there, too, and am certain that the non-intervention was due to the friendship for us of the English masses, and of their leaders,—Bright, Cobden, Peter Taylor, and others. The Mayor's theory, if true, would justify personal animosity to the Queen on the part of all censors of English wrongs. If she could successfully intervene in behalf of the American Union and emancipation, why has she not intervened against British oppressions in Ireland, Egypt, the Soudan, Burmah ? If she could control the hand of Palmerston, why not that of Salisbury ?

The Queen has no power of that kind at all. That she has made her throne the tomb of every last relic of personal authority is the immediate jewel of her crown. The royal prerogative has been exercised once by Gladstone and once by Disraeli, but never by Queen Victoria. As the greatest writer on the English Constitution has said, the Queen would certainly sign her own death-warrant were it laid before her by the Ministers. On her accession, contemporaneous historians remarked that the youthful maiden followed the instructions and words of her Ministers with an intent exactness ; the literal fidelity at that ceremony has been followed by fifty years of intelligent fidelity to the constitution. It needed but such a reign to sum up and consolidate all the results of English revolutions, to embody the liberal progress of a thousand years, to send all arbitrary laws to their fossil bed, to

make England what its Laureate has claimed, the Crowned Republic.

The last time an attempt was made to utilize the Queen politically is especially memorable as bearing upon her sex. In the agitation for female suffrage some of the American advocates of that measure had spoken of the Queen as representing the principle of the participation of woman in political power, and this notion found some echo among the more ignorant friends of that cause in England. But a few years ago, when the subject was before Parliament, a member read an extract from "Our Life in the Highlands," in which the Queen declared women unfit for politics, and that good women will leave these things to men. There were cries of "Order!" throughout the House of Commons, even the majority, to whom the sentiment was agreeable, recognizing that it was unconstitutional to bring influence from the throne to bear on a debate in the Legislature. But the arrow had sped to its mark. The woman's declaration against the political aspirations of her sex was even feathered by cries of "order" which recognized the throne's abdication of political power. At the same time the many eminent and worthy women now claiming the franchise in England felt sore about the incident. The question naturally suggests itself whether submissive readiness to sign measures passed by Parliament, however repugnant to herself, is consistent with the highest character. No one can doubt that the Queen has often done this, and that she would have signed Gladstone's Home Rule bill as promptly as Salisbury's Coercion bill. To those who realize that every assertion of personal prerogative, even on their own side, forges a precedent that may be used on the other side, and restores a weapon which has normally proved fatal to human liberty, it will appear that the wisdom of Victoria as a woman is reflected in her strict constitutionality as a Queen. This is the open secret of the homage paid by the English people to a Queen who is neither beautiful nor brilliant, and whose withdrawal of the throne from all political power has not been accompanied by its usual lustre as a social centre. For though to Puritanism and prosaic Radicalism the Court in mourning has been agreeable, as showing the needlessness of any Court at all, the majority of the English people desire a splendid Court, and have felt aggrieved by its long eclipse. Also the leading political thinkers of England

place a high value on the throne, especially since it has ceased to be a political institution. What is that value?

To the superficial view England appears made up politically of ancient and moldy institutions, trying to maintain themselves in an age that has outgrown them. A nearer study reveals the fact that this apparent antiquity is unreal, and that amid archaic walls, names, decorations, machinery of a modern and even advanced kind is at work. It is true that this implies that each institution is turned to some work for which it was not originally intended, and in some cases the adequacy to modern exigencies is doubtful. But an American is apt to look for such defects where they least exist; in the House of Lords, for instance, where under a delusive show of hereditary legislation sits a Supreme Court not inferior to any in the world. The throne also, from which England was so long ruled, is now turned to other purposes altogether. Its political purpose may be fairly, if paradoxically, described as the reverse of that for which it was founded: the throne is England's defense against monarchy. Were the throne abolished this year it would surely be succeeded by some monarchy, either of the German or the American type, planted by a revolution. Evolutionary ages have determined that complex England cannot be ruled by any individual. By alternate revolutions and bribes the English people have turned their throne to a historic symbol, and the royal family into its guardians. A royal family, by intermarriages and hospitalities, can surround the politically vacant throne with entrenchments of international interest and etiquette which no foreign despot will pass for its seizure. In this direction it is fortunate for England, in the epoch of the consolidation of the German Empire, that its throne is already occupied by a German family. And the same circumstance is advantageous as a check on the royal family itself. It is a guest in England, and feels that it reigns by sufferance. When to this timidity of alienage is added the feminine timidity, it will be seen how, under this Guelph lady, the people have been able to surround their throne with such walls of precedent that no future monarch will be able to break through them. That is, so long as the country is at peace; for if a great war should find a military genius on the throne there might be a relapse from the progressive work of generations. At present there is no such perilous prospect.

A royal family defends England from internal as well as

foreign ambitions. By gathering the supreme social lustre around a non-political centre, political offices are thrown into a sort of atrophy, so far as glory is concerned. No politician will seek office for the sake of any social splendor. It cannot be found there. The statesman or the minister must depend on his services for his renown. Only by intellect, toil, patriotism can he be great. The tinsel and the powers of chieftainship are bestowed in separate estates. The artificial glories are permanently monopolized ; there remains open to personal ambition only the lustre that emanates from personal qualities and deeds. Thus, while the British throne is the gilded sepulchre of monarchy, its occupants,—non-elective, alien, depositaries of all fictitious honors,—guard that sepulchre against any resurrection of monarchy from without or within.

Carlyle raised his lamentations over this grave of kingship, but it was an intolerable evil in England, chiefly because it could only exist by preserving the militant age in which it originated. The resources of England were of old seen to be immeasurable could it only enter on an industrial age. What it needed was domestic peace. It mattered not how many of its roughs and plumed captains might go off to fight in Russia, India, Africa ; the more the better for itself ; England was drained of them and left free to develop its science, literature, and arts. England's two literary ages bear the names of women, and alike were the products of peace. The greatness of the Elizabethan age was based on its forty-five years of rarely interrupted peace at home, and therein the Victorian age is like it. An age of great generals cannot produce a Shakespeare or a Darwin. Elizabeth, more a king than a queen, was yet not really interested in anything outside of England. She compelled religion to speak English and to respect an English Pope. From her time the people were left but one throne to deal with—their own ; this they have steadily shaped to their own ends, however rough-hewn to others by this or that occupant ; and all the thank-offerings now surrounding it are really to an island divinity, ideal embodiment of the average comfort of England. It is this divinity the Archbishop of Canterbury has addressed the jubilee thanksgiving for "the abundance of dominion with which Thou hast exalted and enlarged her empire." The Gods of other nations are idols. The cost of maintaining this composite English divinity is considerable ; it is, however, not mere

commutation money ; it is a bribe by which the imperial wolf, which used to ravage the fold, has been domesticated, induced to accept a jeweled collar, and to guard the flock against invasion of the wild race from which it sprung. The English throne has long been the traitor to the European family of crowned heads ; it has harbored and protected the conspirators against them ; it has patronized a literature and science which undermine every throne. It has equally betrayed the privileged class it originally created, signing away its powers, until the House of Commons, once petitioners at its lordly door, now holds the purse and the sword of the nation. Nothing but the divinity that doth hedge about a legitimate member of the royal fraternity of Europe could have restrained these powerful classes at home and abroad from arresting this steady reduction of their privileges, and transfer of their powers to the people.

As to the mere pecuniary cost of the throne, it must be borne in mind that the greater part of it returns to the people. The castle, the palace, the park, the royal paraphernalia, besides supporting many lives, constitute a distributed museum of antiquities with many useful and agreeable adjuncts. But a few closets are reserved for individual persons amid the magnificence. Emptied of political power, the throne is turned to the functions of landscape gardener, social impresario, and festive masquerader for their Majesty the People. The only serious cost of the throne is moral—the snobbery it engenders. But, if distance lends enchantment to some views, it may occasionally lend horror to others. The traditional American prejudice against the aristocracy of birth is derived from a period when there existed in England a hereditary legislature. The House of Lords has now been reduced to a debating society ; its power to alter or defeat an act of the Legislature has been changed to a mere right of demanding reconsideration. It cannot even require that the measure it temporarily suspends shall be repassed by an increased majority. Now and then, indeed, the peers are permitted to exercise their antiquarian privilege in defeating some non-political measure of infinitesimal interest, such as marriage with a deceased wife's sister. The exception proves the rule. The hereditary political and legislative power being thus extinct, we may view with impartial calmness the English aristocracy.

An aristocracy of birth is, at least, not so vulgar as that of

wealth, which seems the only alternative in a democratic age. In the natural influence of high breeding there is something scientific, at any rate, something Darwinian ; it will be easier to evolve an intellectual aristocracy out of that than from an upper-tendom of millionaires. Just now, when the English nobility are ignobly fighting for a landlord interest with which their class is historically identified, to the sacrifice of humanity, they appear to the worst advantage. It cannot be forgotten, however, that many members of the aristocracy have espoused the cause of Home Rule, and that even Lord Salisbury has brought in a land bill for Ireland which would have been deemed radical by his ancestors.

An aristocracy of birth, relieved of any discredit on account of political or landed privileges, would be a phenomenon not without philosophical interest in this time when the "survival of the fittest" has become a familiar law, while survival of the unfittest seems a no less familiar fact. The conjunction of the Queen's jubilee and our Constitution's centenary may remind us that some things which the English have found unfit to survive, save in name, survive among ourselves in all except name. As regards snobbery, it is doubtful whether we can safely throw stones.

A member of the English aristocracy, also of the House of Commons, familiar with and friendly to society in America, expressed the opinion that more attention is paid to precedence in Washington than in London. Such is my own impression after residence in both cities. Recently an eminent American author, lecturing before a fashionable audience on "Literature in the Republic," spoke with almost passionate horror of the precedence given to title over scholarship on ceremonial occasions. He seemed to think that literature must deteriorate under such conditions. Apart from the non-justification of his theory by the facts, the lecturer showed an amusing unconsciousness that he was manifesting an interest in "precedence" unknown to English scholars. The fact that such ceremonial etiquette in England has been settled for ages, that for centuries it has ceased to be any test of merit or esteem, while conveniently relieving hosts of the responsibility of making distinctions, deprives the arrangement of such serious interest as that which attaches to it in this country. The same lecturer, when presently referring to complaints of under-payment among

American authors, admonished them that they ought not to expect to attain the wealth gained by those who devote themselves to making money. Business men have their reward, literary men theirs, and these ought not to ask the gains of the others. An English author would have paralleled the reasoning. The hereditary noblemen, he would say, has his reward; he goes in to dinner first. But that is not the kind of advantage we are seeking. That does not interest us. For a lord to precede Browning to dinner is, if anything, a compliment to the poet; if he were supposed to be so commonplace as to aspire to the first place on that plane of baubles, he would not be invited. Not only Carlyle, but many literary men, might have had such decorations for the seeking. Tennyson refused title for many years, accepting it at last only because it seemed selfish to withhold the social advantage from his son and daughter-in-law,—his expressed wish to have the title pass to them first being inconsistent with the regulations.

The right way in which to estimate England is to study it as a development out of certain conditions of its own. It can no more be transmuted to our America than its chalk cliffs can be changed to granite hills. Its political and social system has been built by slow-working ages, and refashioned by the genius of the people in necessary obedience to the material given them to work on. Inside feudal walls they have cultivated the fruits of liberty, they have established a republic with decorations of royalty, they have evolved a free-thinking church amid symbols of ecclesiasticism. These facts have become recognized, and have been assured, mainly during the last fifty years; and, because they represent the genius of the English people, in whose face no individual can glory, they are all the more strikingly symbolized in the homely representative of a disfranchised sex whose common sense and unostentatious character have left her nation free to govern itself without interference for this memorable half century.

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